

Merritt Parkway, White Plains Road/Route 127 Bridge  
Spanning White Plains Road/Route 127 at the  
32.91 mile mark on the Merritt Parkway  
Trumbull  
Fairfield County  
Connecticut

HAER No. CT-122

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*PHOTOGRAPHS*

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
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# HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

## Merritt Parkway, White Plains Road/Route 127 Bridge

HAER No. CT-122

**Location:** Spanning White Plains Road/Route 127 at the 32.91 mile mark on the Merritt Parkway in Trumbull, Fairfield County, Connecticut at exit 50

UTM: 18.652530.4566485  
Quad: Bridgeport, Connecticut

**Construction Date:** 1934

**Engineer:** Connecticut Highway Department

**Architect:** George L. Dunkelberger, of the Connecticut Highway Department, acted as head architect for all Merritt Parkway bridges.

**Contractor:** Mariani Construction Company  
New Haven, Connecticut

**Present Owner:** Connecticut Department of Transportation  
Wethersfield, Connecticut

**Present Use:** Used by traffic on the Merritt Parkway to cross White Plains Road/Route 127

**Significance:** The bridges of the Merritt Parkway were predominately inspired by the Art Deco and Art Moderne architectural styles of the 1930s. Experimental forming techniques were employed to create the ornamental characteristics of the bridges. This, combined with the philosophy of incorporating architecture into bridge design and the individuality of each structure, makes them distinctive.

**Historians:** Todd Thibodeau, HABS/HAER Historian  
Corinne Smith, HAER Engineer  
August 1992

For more detailed information on the Merritt Parkway, refer to the Merritt Parkway History Report, HAER No. CT-63.

## LOCAL HISTORY

In 1668, there were only five settlers living beyond the two-mile limit of the Stratford meeting house. Shortly after this date, the land north of Stratford was surveyed, laid out and assigned to individuals. It is unknown if anyone settled there before Abraham Nichols and his family arrived from Stratford in 1690. Other families soon followed, creating a district known as Nichols Farms.<sup>1</sup>

As the population increased, the desire for a local church and government became evident. In 1725, Nichols Farms residents petitioned the General Court for village privileges and a committee was named to view their case. The General Assembly acted in favor of their petition and in October 1725 the Assembly granted the residents of Nichols Farms the "liberty of village privileges," as the Society of Unity. Unity was still a part of Stratford, but could maintain its own meeting house and school, through a local tax.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, residents from Fairfield were clearing lands west of Unity. This area came to be known as the Long Hill region and faced many of the same problems as Nichols Farms. These settlers were forced to pay for a church and school that were too far away for them to use.<sup>3</sup>

In 1740 the General Assembly granted the Long Hill region an exemption from paying taxes for the school and meeting house in Stratfield, between December and mid March. Furthermore, Long Hill was allowed to develop its own meeting house during these months. Thus, the Winter Society of Long Hill was created; this arrangement continued for four years.

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<sup>1</sup>History of Trumbull: Dodrasquicentennial, 1797-1972, (Trumbull: Trumbull Historical Society, Inc., 1972), 25.

<sup>2</sup>History of Trumbull: Dodrasquicentennial, 26.

<sup>3</sup>David A. Cronin, "History of Trumbull, Connecticut," Historical Sketches of Trumbull, Connecticut: Tercentury Celebration, (Trumbull: The Trumbull Historical Committee, 1935), 5.

In 1744, the parishes of Unity and Long Hill, only five miles apart, were consolidated into the Society of North Stratford. The new society functioned in virtually the same manor as the Unity parish. As they were now allowed to manage their own religious and educational affairs, residents became anxious to obtain complete independence from Stratford. For more than fifty years North Stratford sought to become an individual township. In October 1797, the General Assembly passed the "Trumbull Bill" establishing the Society of North Stratford as the town of Trumbull.<sup>4</sup>

The Boston Post Road and the main line of the railroad both passed to the south of Trumbull, isolating the community as a rural farming region until the completion of the Merritt Parkway in 1940. Trumbull was the location the Connecticut Highway Department's main field office during the construction of the Merritt Parkway.

#### BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

White Plains Roads commences in downtown Trumbull and proceeds south to Route 8. The D. V. Frione Construction Company, received the contract to grade the Merritt Parkway from Main Street/Route 25 to the Huntington Turnpike, in Trumbull (ConnDot project #180-02). While the White Plains Road/Route 127 Bridge is located within this section of the Merritt, the grade separation and bridge contract went to the Mariani Construction Company of New Haven, CT (ConnDot project #180-12).<sup>5</sup> The bridge cost \$53,944 and was completed in 1934.<sup>6</sup> The paving work for this region of the

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<sup>4</sup>History of Trumbull: Dodrasquicentennial, 28.

<sup>5</sup>Contract Card File, Map File and Engineering Records Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation, Wethersfield, CT.

<sup>6</sup>White Plains Road/Route 127 Bridge, DOT #753; Bridge Maintenance File, Engineering Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation, Newington, CT.

Merritt also extended from the Black Rock Turnpike to Main Street/Route 25. This contract was awarded to the New Haven Company of New Haven, CT (ConnDot project #180-102).

In 1989, the White Plains Road/Route 127 Bridge had all loose and spalling concrete removed and its deck replaced. The bridge was then patched, sealed, and painted (ConnDot project #144-158).<sup>7</sup>

### BRIDGE DESCRIPTION

The White Plains Road Bridge is a single-span composite-beam bridge spanning 48' with a clear roadway of 60' at a one percent grade for the Merritt Parkway. White Plains Road travels under the bridge at a 45° skew. Parallel wing walls, 34' long, form the approaches for the overpass.

Spaced at 5' on center, all thirteen composite beams consist of steel I-sections encased in concrete. The encasement maintains the shape of an I-section, but deepens the bottom flange to form an arch, so in elevation this bridge looks like the rigid-frame bridges typical of the Merritt Parkway. Channels bracing adjacent beams are also encased. The beams support a slab of varying thickness. At the abutment wall, the depth of the composite beam has nearly doubled, so the steel beam bears on a short length of steel I-section which bears on the wall. The short beam bears on a plate which is anchored to the abutment with 18"-long swedge bolts. The beam is connected with bolts through round holes for fixity at one end of the bridge and with slotted holes for expansion at the other end.

As with most of the Merritt Parkway bridges, the pylons are the prominent architectural feature of the bridge. Each pylon has a tall rectangular central tower flanked by similarly shaped towers of a

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<sup>7</sup>White Plains Road/Route 127 Bridge, DOT #753; Bridge Maintenance File.

lesser height. A short, thin rectangular piece acts as the joint between the towers, forming a five member pylon of alternating heights. This grouping is repeated in the center and end posts of the railing. The balustrade itself is a simple one.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beach, E. Merrill. Trumbull: Church and Town. A History of the Colonial Town of Trumbull and of its Church. Trumbull: The Trumbull Historical Society, Inc., 1972.

Cronin, David A. "History of Trumbull, Connecticut." Historical Sketches of Trumbull, Connecticut: Tercentury Celebration. Trumbull: Trumbull Historical Committee, 1935.

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-----, Contract Card File. Map File and Engineering Records Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation: Wethersfield, CT. This includes construction drawings, copies of which are in the HAER field records.

-----, Bridge Maintenance File. Engineering Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation: Newington, CT.

### PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division of the National Park Service, Robert J. Kapsch, Chief. The Merritt Parkway recording project was sponsored and funded by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDot) and the Federal Highway Administration.

The fieldwork, measured drawings, historical reports and photographs were prepared under the general direction of Eric N. DeLony, HAER Chief, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS Historian.

The recording team consisted of Jacqueline A. Salame (Columbia University), architect and field supervisor; Mary Elizabeth Clark (Pratt Institute) and B. Devon Perkins (Yale University), architectural technicians; Joanne McAllister-Hewlings (US/ICOMOS-Great Britain, University of Sheffield), landscape architect; Corinne Smith (Cornell University), engineer; Gabrielle M. Esperdy (City University of New York) and Todd Thibodeau (Arizona State University), historians; and Jet Lowe, HAER photographer.